



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/565,475	01/20/2006	Horst-Werner Maier-Hunke	407-381	9903
	7590	01/06/2010	EXAMINER	
Mark P. Stone Attorney at Law 50 Broadway Hawthorne, NY 10532			HANSEN, JAMES ORVILLE	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3637	
			MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE
			01/06/2010	PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on December 17, 2009 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10-16 & 18-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Manzardo [US Patent 3,070,235]. Manzardo (figures 1-27, but specifically figures 18-20) teaches of a key box (fig. 18) having a door (110) and a housing (housing as shown in fig. 18) which can be closed by the door, in which the rear wall (defined by 107's) of the housing is provided with key-hanging means (109, 32), characterized in that side walls (101, 102) and the door of the housing comprises cut-to-length continuous profiles which, in the region of their edges facing away from the door, have vertically running guide grooves (105 for example – also, see fig. 19) for receiving the rear wall, and in that the side walls are attached to a bottom part (103) forming the

Art Unit: 3637

floor of the box and a top part (104) forming the roof of the box. Manzardo teaches applicant's inventive claimed key box as disclosed above, but does not specifically state that the housing [for the embodiment in figs. 18-20] is made of metal or plastic [Manzardo states "wood" for this embodiment, but does note in the other embodiments that the housing can be made of sheet metal or other material (see col. 2)].

As to the employed material, the position is taken that it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to utilize a varying array of known materials for the manufacture of the housing depending upon the personal preferences of the designer and/or the designated environment for the finished product since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *Sinclair & Carroll Co. v. Interchemical Corp.*, 325 U.S. 327, 65 USPQ 297 (1945); and *In re Leshin*, 227 F.2d 197, 125 USPQ 416 (CCPA 1960).

As to the material being "extruded", the position is taken that the method of forming the device is not germane to the issue of patentability of the device itself, and therefore, the limitation has not been given patentable weight.

As to claim 2, the side walls are configured as solid profiles and do not have a hollow portion; however, the position is taken that it would have been an obvious matter of personal preference to vary the shape, profile or size of an element depending upon the needs and/or preferences of the user, since such a modification would have involved a mere change in the configuration of a component. A change of this degree is

Art Unit: 3637

generally recognized as being within the level of ordinary skill in the art. In re Dailey, 357 F.2d 669, 149 USPQ 47 (CCPA 1966) (The court held that the configuration of the claimed disposable plastic nursing container was a matter of choice which a person of ordinary skill in the art would have found obvious absent persuasive evidence that the particular configuration of the claimed container was significant). Additionally, the Federal Circuit has held that, where the only difference between the prior art and the claims was a recitation of relative dimensions of the claimed device and a device having the claimed relative dimensions would not perform differently than the prior art device, the claimed device was not patentably distinct from the prior art device. Gardner v. TEC Systems, Inc., 725 F.2d 1338, 220 USPQ 777 (Fed. Cir. 1984), cert. denied, 469 U.S. 830, 225 USPQ 232 (1984).

As to claim 4, Manzardo teaches the side walls and door as being made of wood profiles, but not extruded aluminum; however, the claimed feature is deemed obvious in view of the previously cited rational.

As to claim 5, Manzardo teaches the top and bottom parts as being made of wood parts, but not plastic molded parts; however, the claimed feature is deemed obvious in view of the previously cited rational.

As to claim 8, the side walls have flanges (viewed as the end flange behind the groove on each wall – fig. 19) forming parts of the wall.

As to claim 10, the key hanging means are formed by a key rail (32) which is hung in a perforation or groove (109) in the real wall.

As to claim 11, the top and bottom parts are similarly configured.

Art Unit: 3637

As to claim 12, the side walls are similarly configured.

As to claims 13-16 & 18-20, these limitations/features have been addressed previously within the body of the rejection.

As to new claim 21, Manzardo teaches of a key box (fig. 18) having a door (110) and a housing (housing) which can be closed by the door, the housing comprising a rear wall (defined by 107's) and side walls (101, 102), the rear wall of the housing being provided with key hanging means (109, 32), wherein the side walls and the door comprise cut-to-length continuous profiles which, in the region of the edges of the side walls facing away from the door, have vertically running guide grooves (105's) for receiving webs (viewed as the lateral distal ends of the 107's – so far as broadly claimed) of the rear wall, the guide grooves being engaged behind the webs (fig. 19), the side walls being attached to a bottom part (103) forming a floor of the box and a top part (104) forming a roof of the box.

Manzardo teaches applicant's inventive claimed key box as disclosed above, but does not specifically state that the housing [for the embodiment in figs. 18-20] is made of metal or plastic [Manzardo states "wood" for this embodiment, but does note in the other embodiments that the housing can be made of sheet metal or other material (see col. 2)]. As such, the position is taken that it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to utilize a varying array of known materials for the manufacture of the housing depending upon the personal preferences of the designer and/or the designated environment for the finished product since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a

Art Unit: 3637

known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *Sinclair & Carroll Co. v. Interchemical Corp.*, 325 U.S. 327, 65 USPQ 297 (1945); and *In re Leshin*, 227 F.2d 197, 125 USPQ 416 (CCPA 1960).

4. Claims 1-5, 8, 11-16 & 18-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hsu [US Patent 6,474,759]. Hsu (figures 1-27) teaches of a “key” box (fig. 6) having a door (7) and a housing (housing as shown in fig. 6) which can be closed by the door, in which the rear wall (4) of the housing is provided with key-hanging means (viewed as the horizontal ledge), characterized in that side walls (2, 3) and the door of the housing comprises continuous profiles which, in the region of their edges facing away from the door, have vertically running guide grooves (34 for example – also, see fig. 1) for receiving the rear wall, and in that the side walls are attached to a bottom part (1) forming the floor of the box and a top part (5) forming the roof of the box. Hsu teaches applicant’s inventive claimed “key” box as disclosed above, but does not specifically state that the housing is made of metal or plastic [although, it is readily apparent that the housing is made of a plastic material]. As such, the position is taken that it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to utilize a varying array of known materials for the manufacture of the housing depending upon the personal preferences of the designer and/or the designated environment for the finished product since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *Sinclair & Carroll*

Art Unit: 3637

Co. v. Interchemical Corp., 325 U.S. 327, 65 USPQ 297 (1945); and *In re Leshin*, 227 F.2d 197, 125 USPQ 416 (CCPA 1960).

As to the material being “extruded”, the position is taken that the method of forming the device is not germane to the issue of patentability of the device itself, and therefore, the limitation has not been given patentable weight.

As to claim 2, the side walls are configured partially as hollow profiles (note fig. 1) so far as broadly claimed.

As to claim 3, the top part and bottom part are provided with cavities (15, 11 respectively) while the side walls having mating guide lugs (25, 35; 21, 31 respectively). Hsu teaches this lug to cavity connection, but not as prescribed by applicant [applicant claims the lugs being on the top and bottom parts]. However, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the box of Hsu so as to reconfigure the elements associated with the top, bottom and side parts/walls since it has been held that a mere reversal of the essential working parts of a device involves only routine skill in the art and therefore will not distinguish the invention from the prior art in terms of patentability. *In re Gazda*, 219 F.2d 449, 104 USPQ 400 (CCPA 1955) (Prior art disclosed a clock fixed to the stationary steering wheel column of an automobile while the gear for winding the clock moves with the steering wheel; mere reversal of such movement, so the clock moves with wheel, was held to be an obvious expedient.).

Art Unit: 3637

As to claim 4, Hsu teaches the side walls and door as being apparently molded profiles, but not extruded aluminum profiles. However, the claimed feature is deemed obvious in view of the previously cited rational.

As to claim 5, Hsu teaches the top and bottom parts as being apparently molded profiles, but not does specifically recite plastic molded parts; however, the claimed feature is deemed obvious in view of the previously cited rational.

As to claim 8, the side walls have flanges (viewed as the end flange defining the groove on each wall – fig. 1) forming parts of the wall.

As to claim 11, the top and bottom parts are similarly configured. As to claim 12, the side walls are similarly configured.

As to claims 13-16 & 18-21, these limitations/features have been addressed previously within the body of the rejection.

5. Claim 10 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hsu in view of Manzardo. Hsu teaches applicant's inventive claimed "key" box as disclosed above, but does not show the key hanging means as being a key rail that is hung in perforations in the rear wall. Manzardo (see figs. 16-17) is cited as an evidence reference to show that it was known to utilize a key rail (32) hung in perforations (94) in a rear wall (93) of a key box. Accordingly, the position is taken that it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the rear wall of Hsu so as to incorporate perforations for accepting a rail in view of Manzardo's teaching because this arrangement would enhance the versatility of Hsu's box since the addition of the perforations and rail would allow items to be hung on

Art Unit: 3637

the rear wall, as opposed to be supported by the bottom part or shelf (6), thereby allowing for quick inspection by a user since the items would be suspended vertically along the rear wall.

6. Claims 6, 7, 9 & 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Manzardo in view of Chuan [US Patent 5,451,102] and Garton et al., [US Patent 5,076,454]. Manzardo (figures 1-27, but specifically figures 18-20) teaches of a key box (fig. 18) having a door (110) and a housing (housing as shown in fig. 18) which can be closed by the door, in which a rear wall of the housing comprises a plurality of segments (107's) disposed one above the other and is provided with key-hanging means (109, 32), characterized in that side walls (101, 102) and the door of the housing comprises cut-to-length continuous profiles which, in the region of their edges facing away from the door, have vertically running guide grooves (105 for example – also, see fig. 19) for receiving the rear wall, and in that the side walls are attached to a bottom part (103) forming the floor of the box and a top part (104) forming the roof of the box. Manzardo teaches applicant's inventive claimed key box as disclosed above, but does not specifically state that the housing [for the embodiment in figs. 18-20] is made of metal or plastic [Manzardo states "wood" for this embodiment, but does note in the other embodiments that the housing can be made of sheet metal or other material (see col. 2)]; does not show the top and bottom parts being provided with lugs which jut into cavities in the side walls; and does not show the segments as having studs and recesses on upper and lower edges of the segments in order to join the segments together.

Art Unit: 3637

As to the employed material, the position is taken that it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to utilize a varying array of known materials for the manufacture of the housing depending upon the personal preferences of the designer and/or the designated environment for the finished product since it has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *Sinclair & Carroll Co. v. Interchemical Corp.*, 325 U.S. 327, 65 USPQ 297 (1945); and *In re Leshin*, 227 F.2d 197, 125 USPQ 416 (CCPA 1960).

As to the lug and cavity connection, Chuan (figures 1-6) is cited as an evidence reference to show that it was known in the furniture art to utilize guide lugs (6) with top and bottom parts (2) in order to connect with cavities (32/33) in side walls (3) so that an assembled cabinet can be constructed. Accordingly, the position is taken that it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the cabinet of the prior art by incorporating the connection system as taught by Chuan because this arrangement would allow the cabinet of Manzardo to be assembled and disassembled in an easy manner [abstract of Chuan].

As to the segments having studs and recesses, Garton et al., (figures 1-21) is cited as an evidence reference to show that it was known in the knockdown art to utilize segmented panels (24a, 24b) having studs (can be viewed as either the structure labeled as (56) or element (58)) and recesses (can be viewed as either the structure labeled as (34) or element (64) forming the groove) [56 mates with 34, while 58 mates

Art Unit: 3637

with the groove of 64] on opposite edges of the segments. Accordingly, the position is taken that it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the cabinet of the prior art by incorporating the segment connection means as taught by Garton because this arrangement would securely lock the segments together thereby increasing the rigidity of the rear wall, yet still allow the slots to remain (note fig. 9 of Garton) for retaining the suspension elements of Manzardo.

As to claim 7, the material of the segments appears to be wood, not plastic molded parts; however, the claimed feature is deemed obvious in view of the previously cited rational.

As to claims 9 & 17, the side walls have flanges (viewed as the flanged portion along the rear distal end of each side located rearward of the rear wall – fig. 19) and these flanges act as a guide for the segments.

Response to Arguments

7. Applicant's arguments filed December 17, 2009 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. The position is taken that all the claimed limitations have been adequately addressed within the body of the rejections. Furthermore, in response to applicant's remarks that the limitation "key-hanging means" provides structure for hanging keys. The examiner agrees with applicant on this issue, but differs on the scope of what can constitute a key-hanging means. As presently utilized, any "means" that can fulfill the task of supporting a key is permissible to satisfy the claimed limitation. Applicant recites 112(6) as proof that structure is provided when recited in a means plus

Art Unit: 3637

function format. The examiner would like to point out that the language currently employed within all the independent claims “provided with key-hanging means” does not invoke 35 U.S.C. 112, paragraph 6 since the limitation in question does not meet the three-pronged analysis. In order to invoke the 6th paragraph under 112, the means plus function language must do the following: 1) the claim limitation must use the term “means”, 2) a specified function follows the “means” and is linked to the means, and 3) there is an absence of definite structure, material and acts for achieving the specified function. Accordingly, the limitation in question fails the second component and is therefore not given a more restrictive interpretation in light of the specification.

Conclusion

8. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Ebert describes a modular box. Simon et al., describes a cabinet with cut to length extruded aluminum frame components. Nakagawa describes a box with extruded framing members.

9. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the

Art Unit: 3637

shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to James O. Hansen whose telephone number is 571-272-6866. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday between 8-4:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, J. Allen Shriver [Acting] can be reached on 571-272-6698. The fax phone number for the organization where this application is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/James O. Hansen/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 3637

JOH
January 4, 2010